

The Wheeler-Beecher House
Bethany, Connecticut

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Connecticut

Historic American Buildings Survey
Harold H. Davis, District Officer
29 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn.

THE WHEELER-BEECHER HOUSE

Bethany, New Haven County, Connecticut

Owner: Huntington Lee, on Route #63, Bethany, Conn.

Date of Erection: 1801

Architect or Builder: David Hoadley, Architect

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two and One-half

Materials of Construction: Stone foundation
Clapboard exterior
Wood shingled roof
Brick chimneys

Other Existing Records: Pamphlet "The Hoadley House" -
The Gale Electric Company.
Bethany Sketches & Records -
W. C. Sharpe.

List of Photographs:

1. Front Elevation
2. Front Entrance Elevation
3. Mantel - East Wall of Living Room
4. Mantel - East Wall of Bed Room - First Floor
5. Smoke Oven in Attic

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Bethany, New Haven County, Connecticut

Among the fine old mansions, well built and tastefully decorated, which dot the hills and valleys of Connecticut, is the Wheeler-Beecher House. It is situated a few hundred feet north of the center of Bethany facing the main road.

This old house, which was built for Darius Beecher by the famed architect David Hoadley in 1801, attracts the attention of the most casual passerby by reason of the fine material and workmanship. The very excellent taste of the design speaks well of the intellect and pocket book of its long ago builder.

The builder of the house, Darius Beecher, was a very wealthy man at the time the house was built, but it is said that he went west with his family and there lost his entire fortune. Later the house was occupied by Abraham Beecher who was in no way related to the builder. Later it went into the possession of one Lewis Thomas, and then to Orrin Wheeler whose family kept it until 1899. It is now owned by Huntington Lee and his sister Josephine, and is the home of the Gale Electric Company.

The edifice is a gem, and it is often mentioned that should it ever be demolished, art collectors would fight for even a bit of doorway, a mantel, or an arch, so beautifully are the separate parts constructed. It is a typical example of David Hoadley's work and one of the most beautiful examples of true Colonial architecture in all of New England.

The front door of the Wheeler-Beecher House is distinguished by tall fluted pillars and an arched entrance. The walk is gracefully flagged, and the rounded window above the entrance is a distinguished accent of a well conceived design.

On either side of the main hall, which extends from the front of the main house and which contains handsome arches overhead, are two front parlors. Each of these are about fifteen feet square and have two beautiful arched alcoves with a large fireplace and mantel between them. In some of the rooms the wall near the ceiling is mounted by an exquisite frieze.

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There are no less than ten fireplaces within this house. In the garret, curiously enough, is a brick smoke room which was used for the curing of pork and beef.

The huge ballroom on the second floor was the scene of much gaiety during the olden days. The built-in seats around the walls of this hall, could they talk, would have some very interesting memories to reveal. This great hall, the largest for miles around, was used for social affairs of the local church and others, for the regular town meeting, and for many years, for the meetings of the Masonic Lodge.

The present owners cooperate pleasantly with those appreciative of seeing this interesting structure, and cheerfully point out the magnificent details which make this a sterling monument to the work of David Hoadley.

Sources of Information: Pamphlet "The Hoadley House" -
The Gale Electric Company.
Bethany Sketches & Records -
W. C. Sharpe.

Author: *John E. Flanagan*

Approved: *Harold H. Davis*

Date: *Jan. 15, 1940*

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